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Smith et al.

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(54) **LIGHT-EMITTING POLYMER**

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H01L 27/30 (2006.01)
C09K 11/04 (2006.01)
C08G 77/388 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC . **136/244**; 136/257; 252/301.17; 252/301.35;
252/646; 525/326.5

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None
See application file for complete search history.

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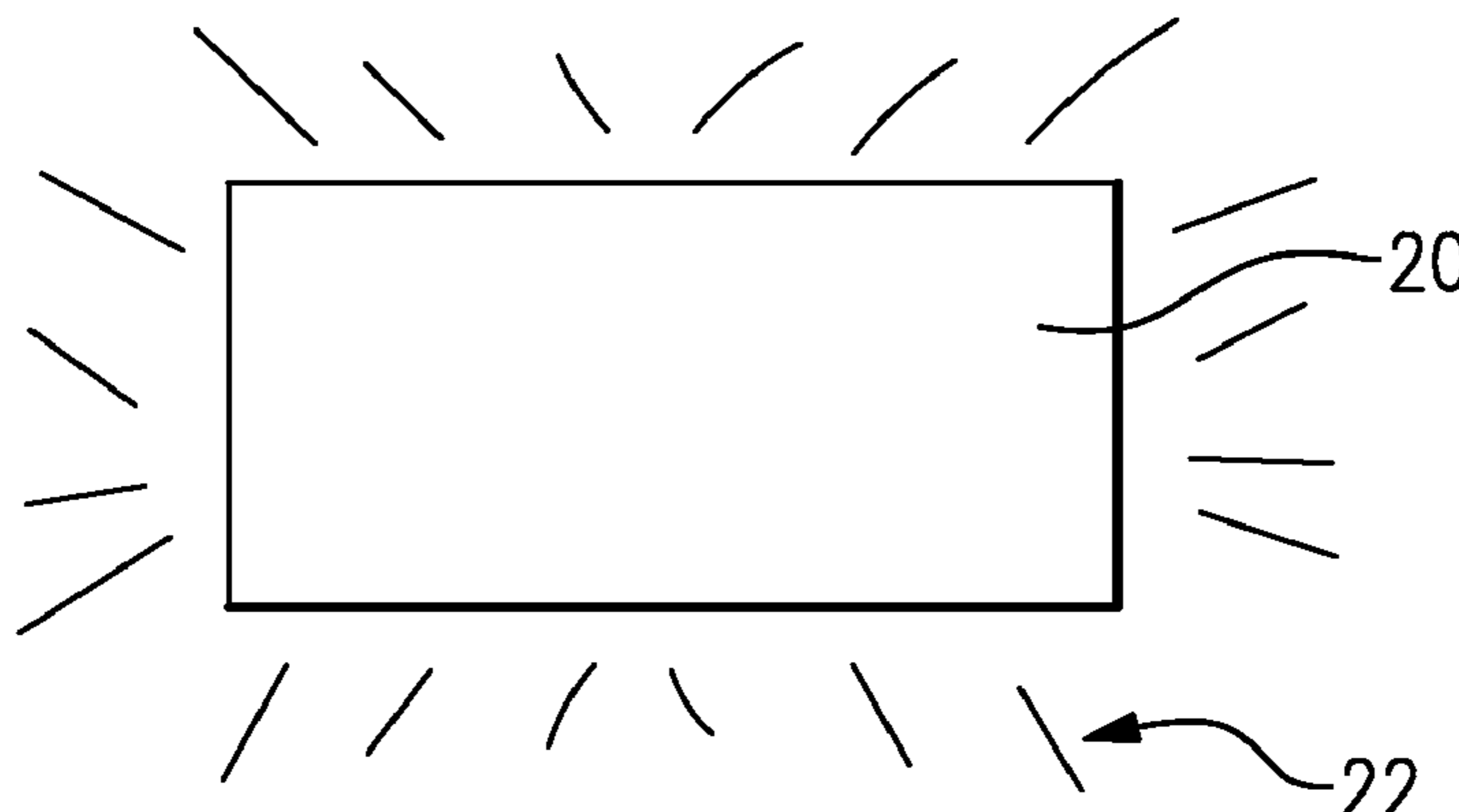
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A light-emitting polymer composition includes a polysiloxane polymer having tritium that emits radiation and a wavelength-shifter chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer or a siloxane carrier dispersed within the polysiloxane polymer. The wavelength-shifter emits light in response to the radiation.

18 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet



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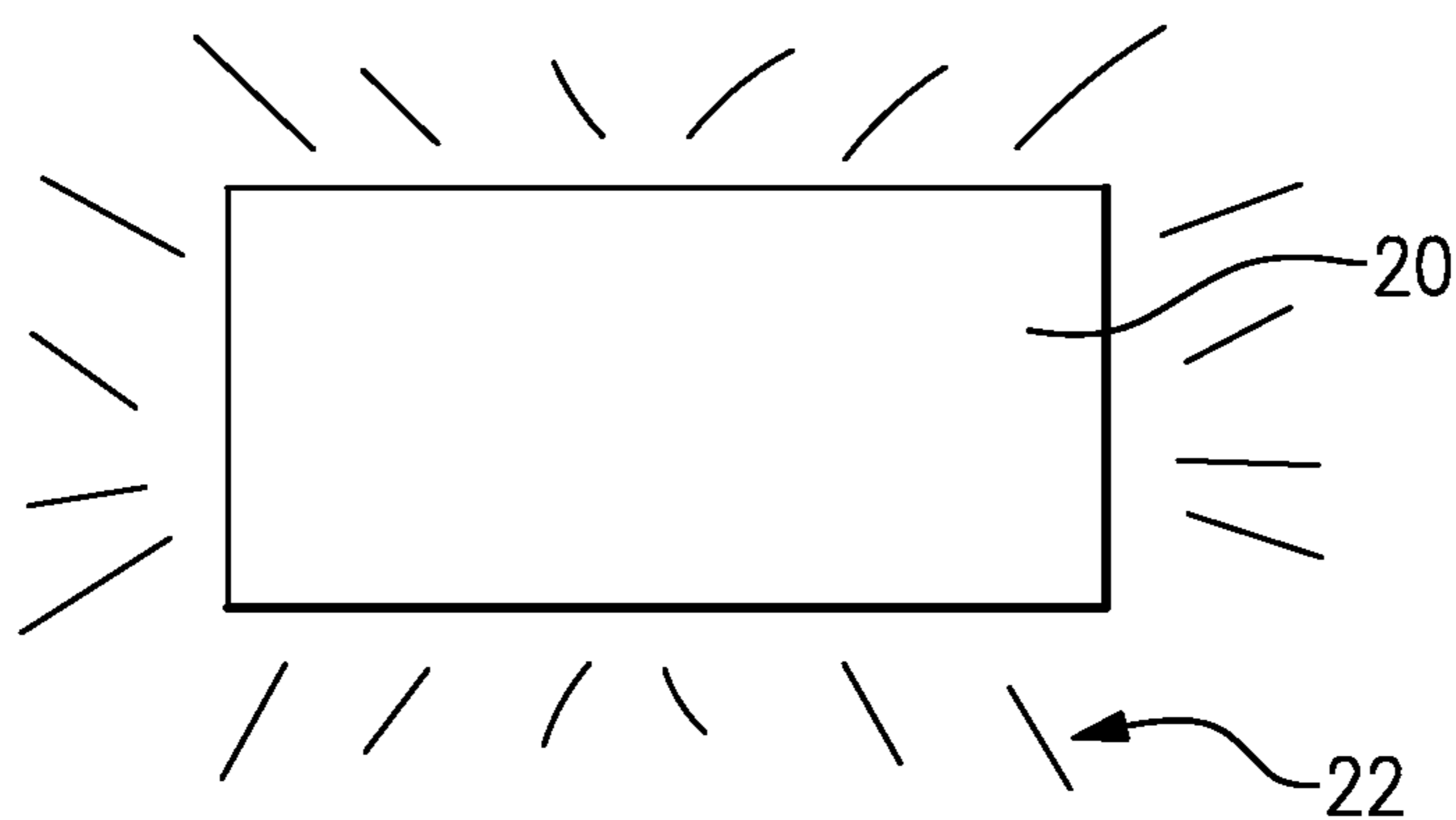


FIG. 1

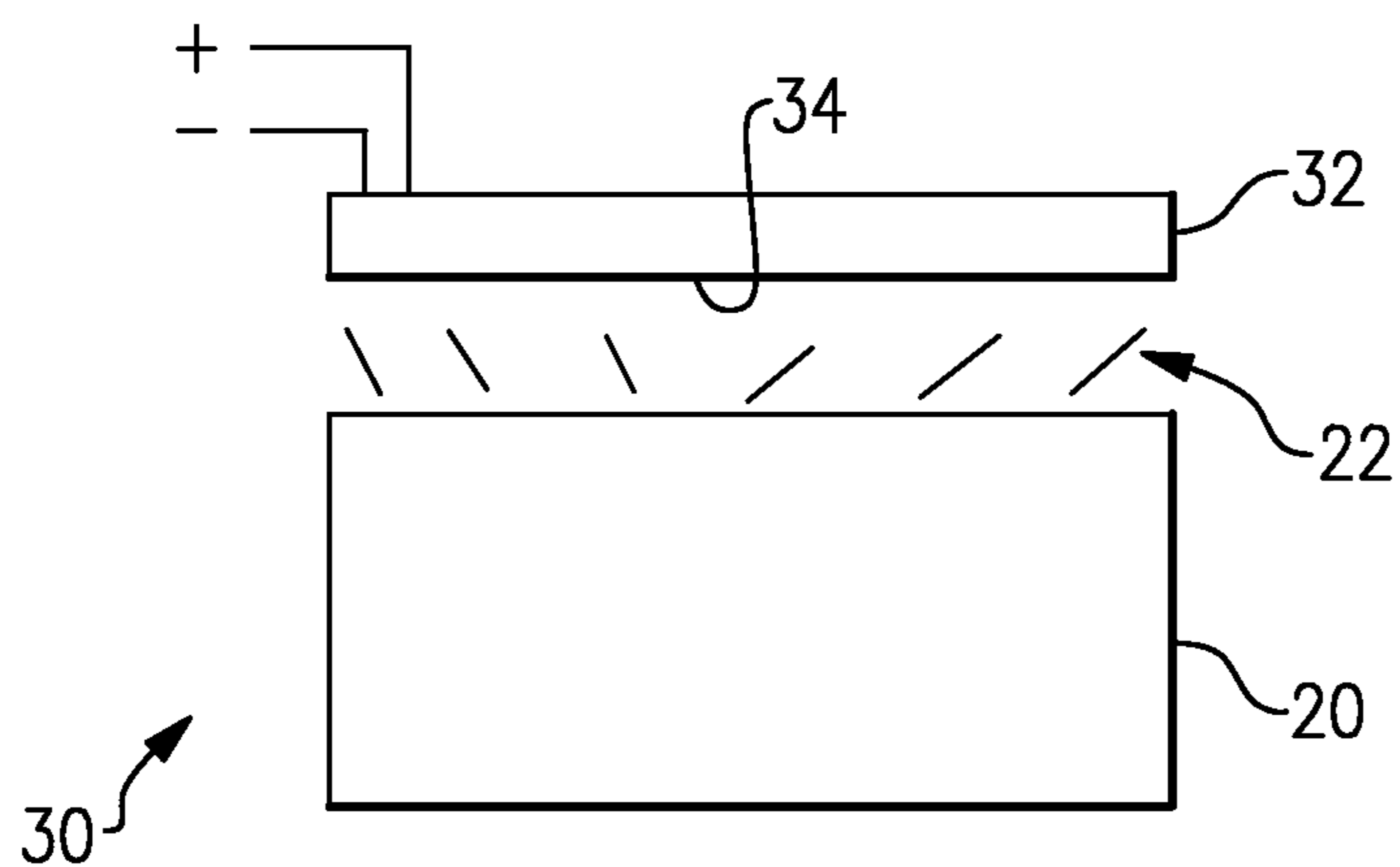


FIG. 2

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LIGHT-EMITTING POLYMER

RELATED APPLICATION

This disclosure claims priority to U.S. Provisional Appli- 5
cation No. 61/235,729, filed on Aug. 21, 2009.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This disclosure relates to light-emitting polymers for use as 10
light or energy sources.

Light-emitting polymers are known and used for self-illu-
minated signs, "nuclear" batteries, and the like. As an
example, conventional light-emitting polymers may be 15
formed from polystyrene and labeled with tritium that emits
radiation, such as beta particles. The polymer is doped with a
scintillator, such as a phosphor, that emits visible light when
irradiated with the radiation from the tritium. That is, the
light-emitting polymer is self-illuminating and may be used
for signs or with photovoltaic devices to generate electric 20
current.

SUMMARY

An example light-emitting polymer composition includes 25
a polysiloxane polymer having tritium that emits radiation
and a wavelength-shifter chemically bonded to the polysilo-
xane polymer or a siloxane carrier dispersed within the polysi-
loxane polymer. The wavelength-shifter emits light in
response to the radiation. The light-emitting polymer compo- 30
sition may be used as a light source.

In another aspect, the light-emitting polymer is used as an
energy source with a photoelectric device that is located adja- 35
cent to the light-emitting polymer and is operable to provide
an electric current in response to the light from the light-
emitting polymer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The various features and advantages of the disclosed 40
examples will become apparent to those skilled in the art from
the following detailed description. The drawings that accom-
pany the detailed description can be briefly described as fol-
lows.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example light-emitting polymer. 45

FIG. 2 illustrates an example energy source that includes a
light-emitting polymer.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED
EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 illustrates selected portions of an example light-
emitting polymer **20**, which may be used as a light source or
an energy source for providing electric current, as will be
described later in this description. One premise of this disclo- 55
sure is that the exemplary light-emitting polymer **20** provides
greater stability than previously known light-emitting poly-
mers and is more efficient in generating light. The term
"light," "illuminate" and variations thereof as used in this
disclosure may refer to all forms of electromagnetic radiation, 60
such as ultraviolet and visible radiation, and are not limited to
electromagnetic radiation within the visible wavelength spec-
trum.

As indicated above, the light-emitting polymer **20** emits
light **22** and is thereby self-illuminating. For instance, the 65
light-emitting polymer **20** includes polysiloxane with tritium
bonded thereto that emits radiation, such as beta particles. A

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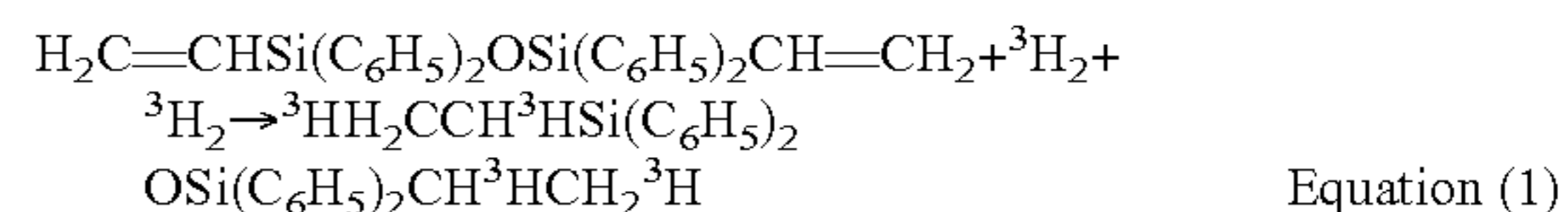
wavelength-shifter may be chemically bonded to the polysi-
loxane polymer. The wavelength-shifter emits light, such as
ultraviolet or visible light, in response to the radiation emitted
from the tritium. The polysiloxane polymer may also include
other additives, depending upon the intended use of the light-
emitting polymer **20**, such as cross-linking agents, plasticiz-
ers, anti-oxidants, and the like.

The polysiloxane is durable and less susceptible to cross-
linking or degradation from the emitted radiation than prior
light-emitting polymers. For instance, former light-emitting
polymers based on polystyrene exhibit limited durability
because the radiation causes cross-linking and "color cen-
ters" that reduce light emission. In comparison, the radiation
does not cause significant cross-linking or "color centers" in
polysiloxane and the disclosed light-emitting polymer **20**
may thereby exhibit little reduction in functionality over a
period of at least several years.

In the illustrated example, the wavelength-shifter is chemi- 20
cally bonded to the polysiloxane polymer. In other words, the
wavelength-shifter is not merely doped into or mixed with the
polymer but is instead chemically bonded to the polymer
monomer. The wavelength-shifter has limited solubility
within the polysiloxane polymer if physically mixed with the
polymer or doped into the polymer. Thus, chemically bond-
ing the wavelength-shifter to the polysiloxane polymer
avoids the solubility limitation and thereby allows a greater
amount of the wavelength shifter to be incorporated into the
light-emitting polymer **20**. The light-emitting polymer **20** is
thereby capable of more efficiently converting the radiation
emitted from the tritium into light.

In one example, chemically bonding the wavelength-
shifter to the polysiloxane polymer permits a concentration of
wavelength-shifter of approximately 0.015 gram/gram in the
polysiloxane. In one specific example, the concentration of
wavelength-shifter may be about 0.75 grams in about 50
grams of polysiloxane.

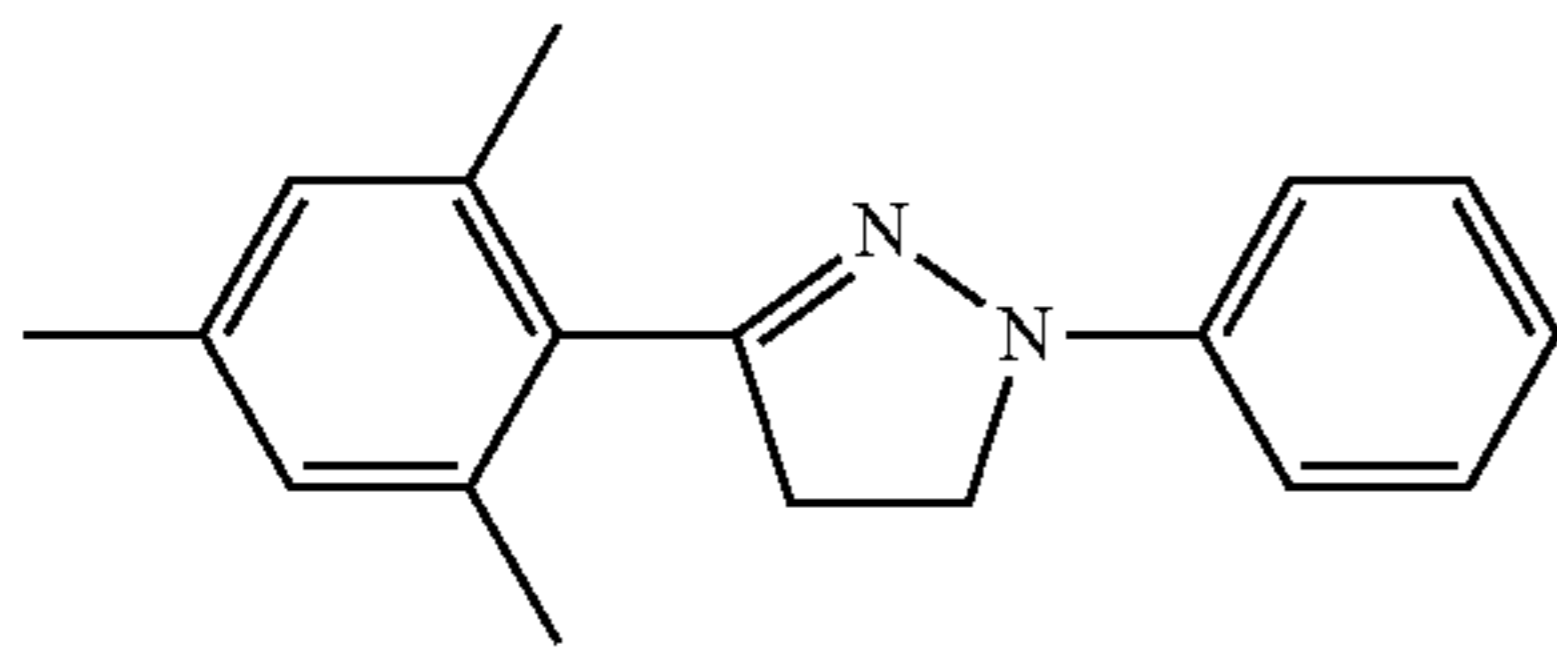
The tritium may alternatively be incorporated into the
light-emitting polymer **20** through use of a tritium carrier. The
tritium carrier may be the reaction product of divinyltetra phe-
nyldisiloxane with tritium. An example of this reaction is
shown below in equation 1.



The tritium carrier may then be mixed with a siloxane
monomer, which is then polymerized in a known manner to
form the light-emitting polymer **20**. The tritium carrier is not
chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer but is com-
patible with the polymer through the use of the same chemical
side groups on the siloxane monomer and on the carrier. In
this case, each of the siloxane monomer and the carrier may
include phenyl groups and siloxane groups for compatibility.
Thus, the carrier may bind to the polysiloxane through sec-
ondary bonding that involves attraction between the chemical
side groups.

The wavelength-shifter may be any type of wavelength-
shifter that is suitable for chemically bonding with the pol-
ysiloxane polymer, or siloxane monomer during a prepara-
tion stage of the light-emitting polymer **20**. As an example,
the wavelength-shifter may be 1-phenyl-3-mesityl-2-pyrazo- 65
line, or PMP. An example structure of a PMP molecule is
shown below as wavelength-shifter **1**.

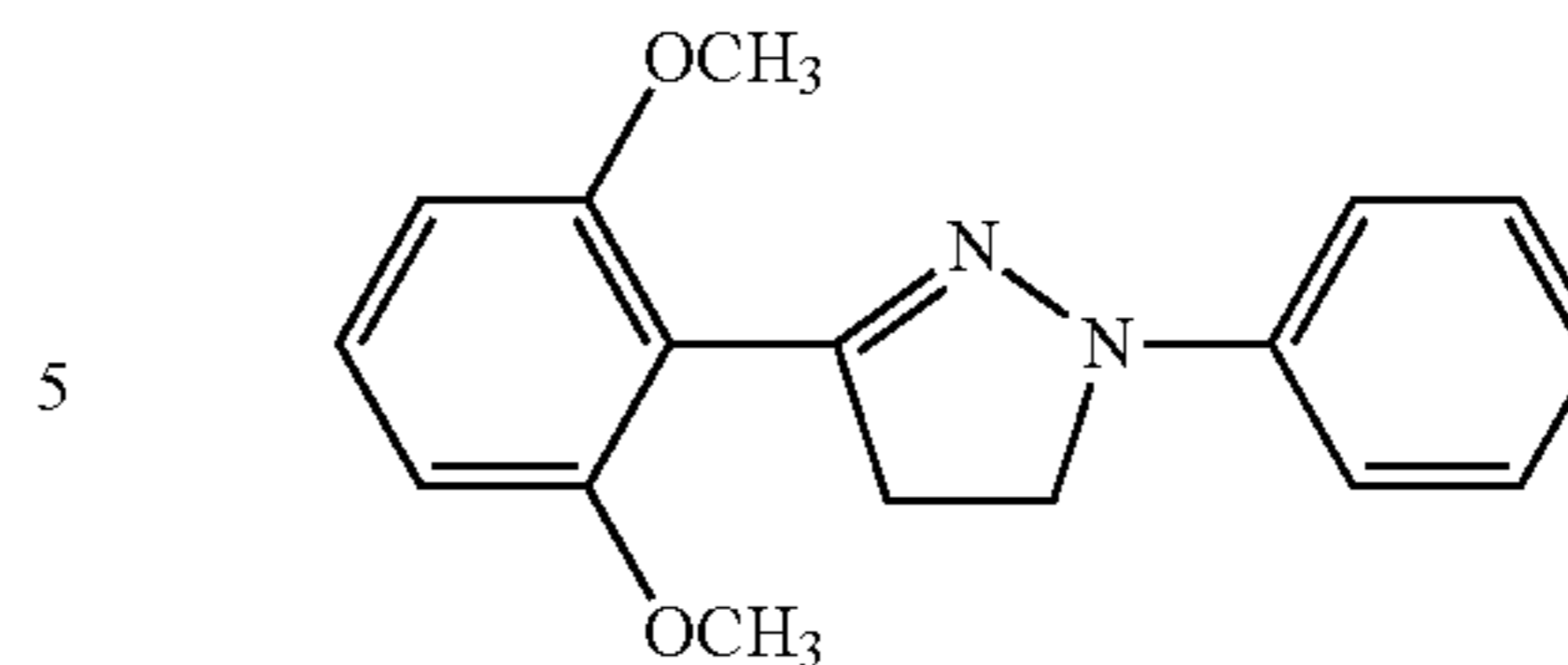
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Wavelength-Shifter 1

In one modification, the PMP molecule may include additional side groups that may facilitate compatibility with the polysiloxane polymer or reaction with the siloxane monomer to attach the wavelength-shifter to the monomer. As an example, the structure of an example modified PMP is shown below as wavelength-shifter 2.

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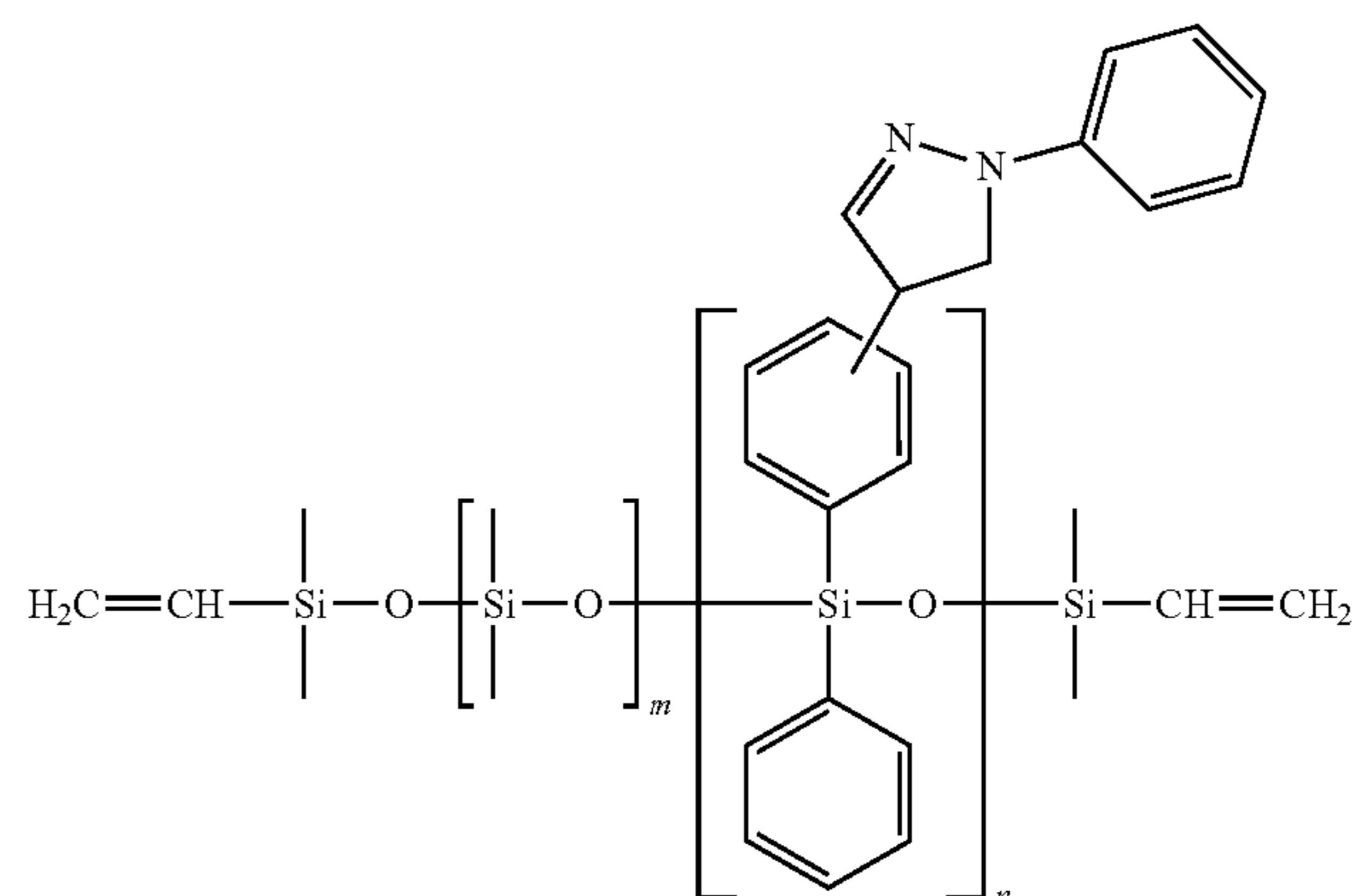
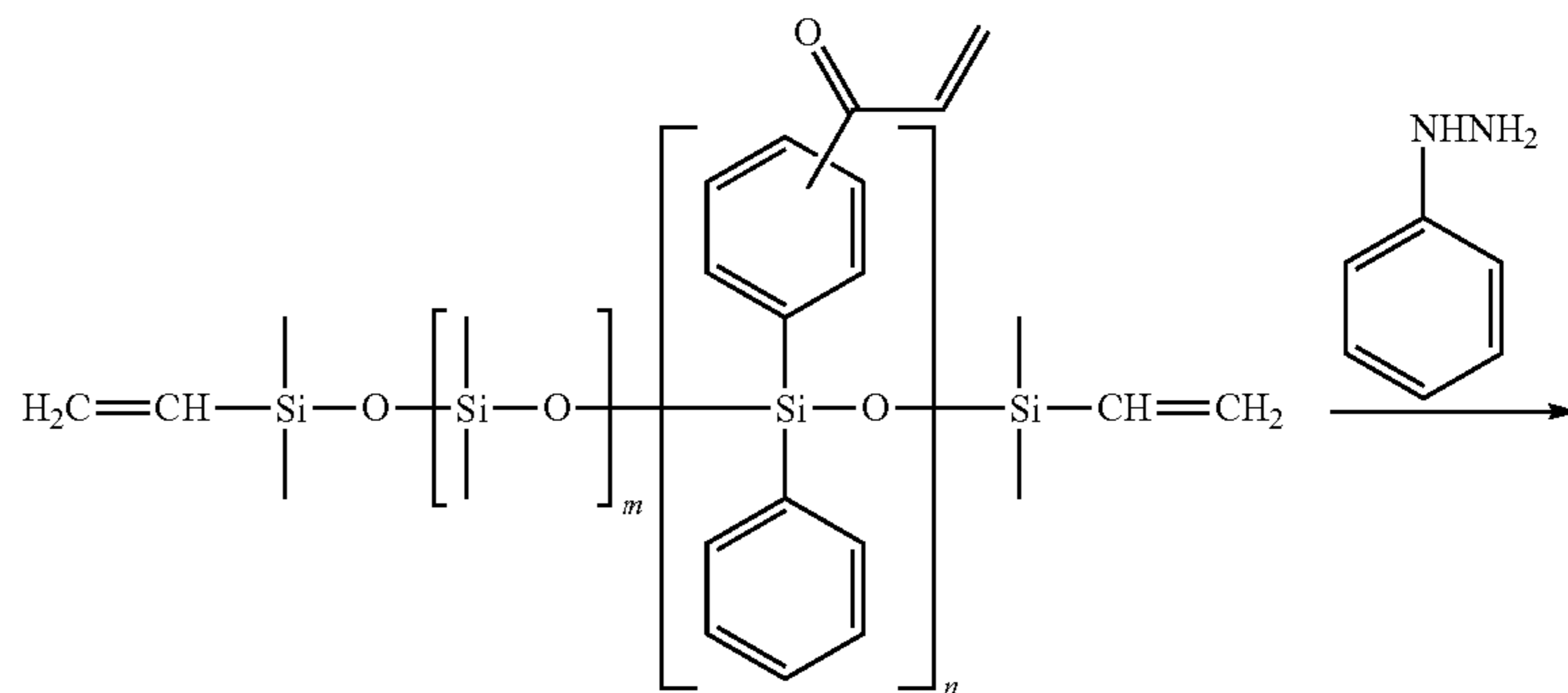
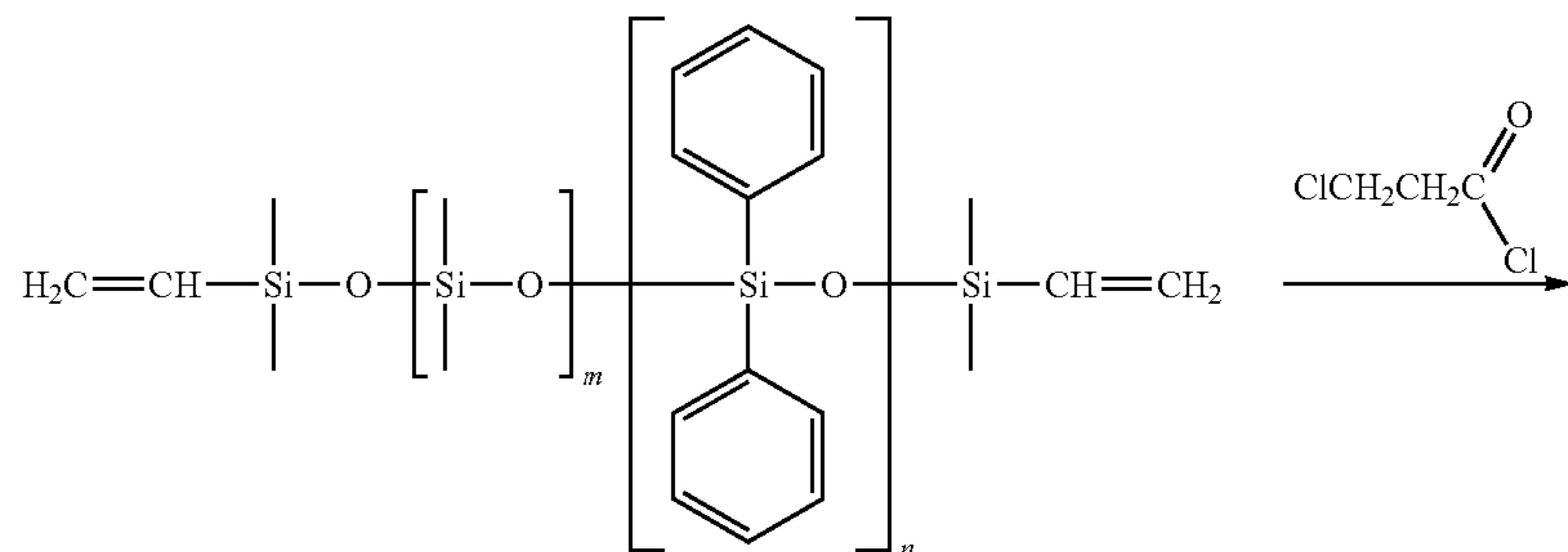
Wavelength-Shifter 2

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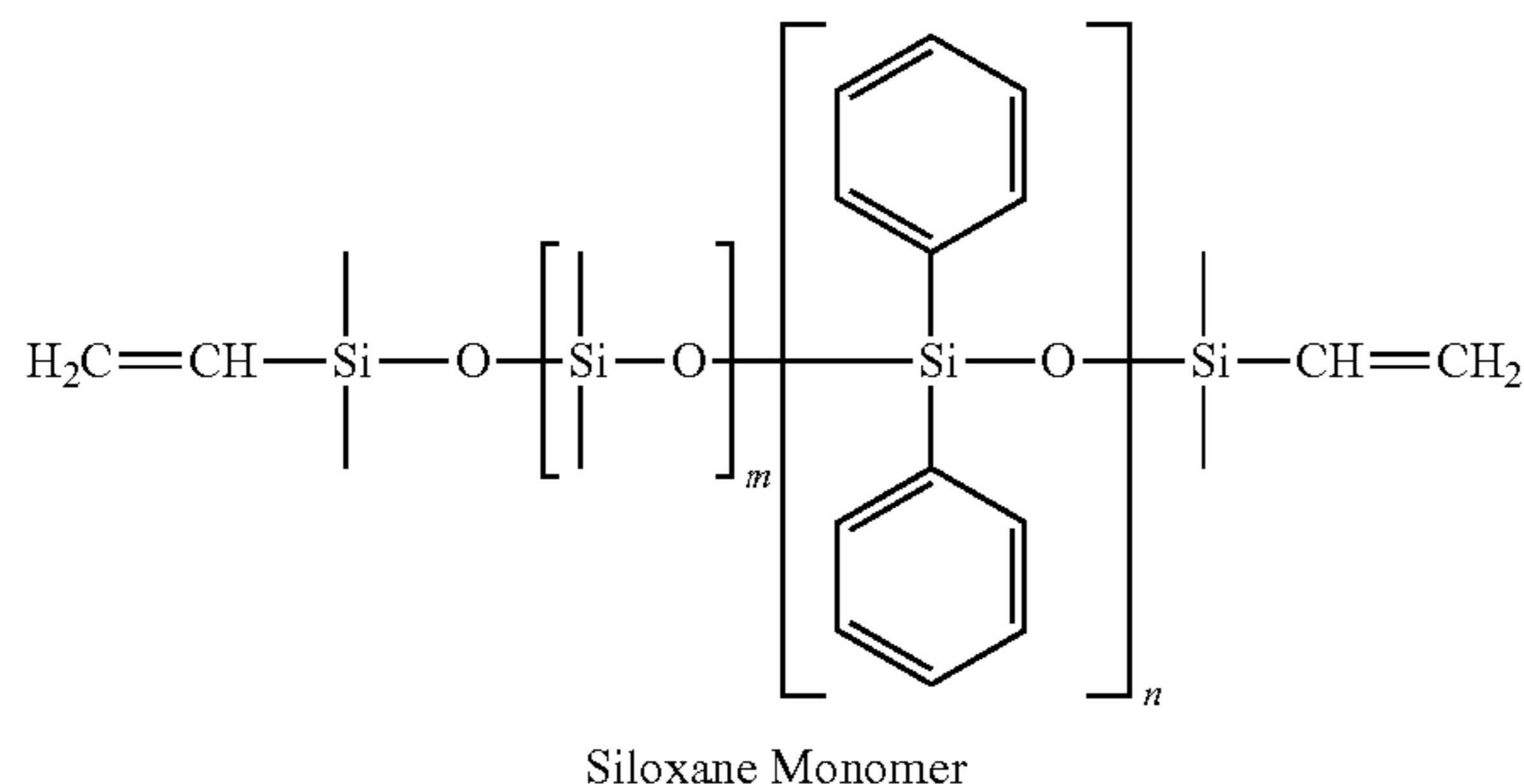
20

In one example of the preparation of the light-emitting polymer 20, a siloxane monomer and the desired additives may be mixed with the tritium carrier and the selected wavelength-shifter to bond the wavelength-shifter to the siloxane monomer. The wavelength-shifter reacts with the siloxane monomer to replace one of the phenyl groups or attach to one of the phenyl groups in a chemical bond. The mixture may be heated to facilitate the reaction and known laboratory or manufacturing equipment may be utilized to carry out the preparation. An example of the preparation of a wavelength-shifter 1 bonded to the polysiloxane is shown below, where m and n are each integers greater than or equal to one.



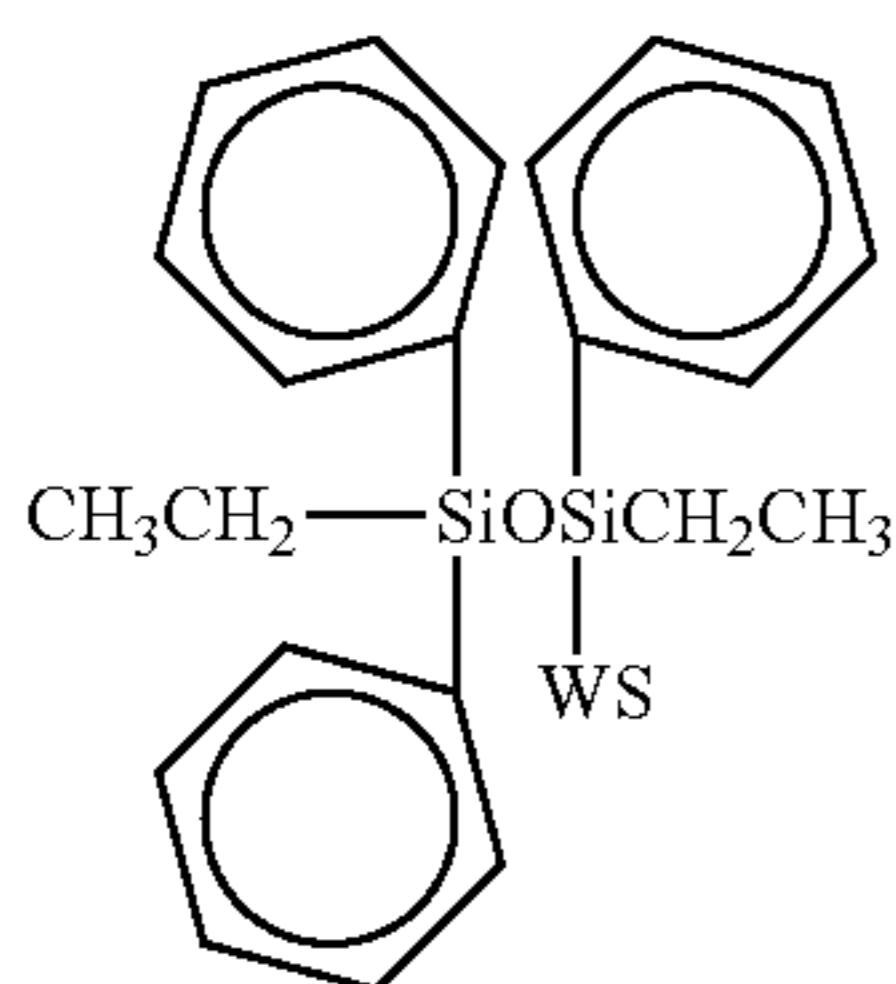
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The siloxane monomer may also be selected for compatibility with the wavelength-shifter. As an example, the siloxane monomer may include one or more side groups that function as reaction sites for chemically reacting with the wavelength-shifter to bond the wavelength-shifter to the polysiloxane backbone. The siloxane monomer structure illustrated below, a phenylsiloxane, may be used in combination with the above wavelength-shifters to form the light-emitting polymer **20** as tritiated polyphenylsiloxane.

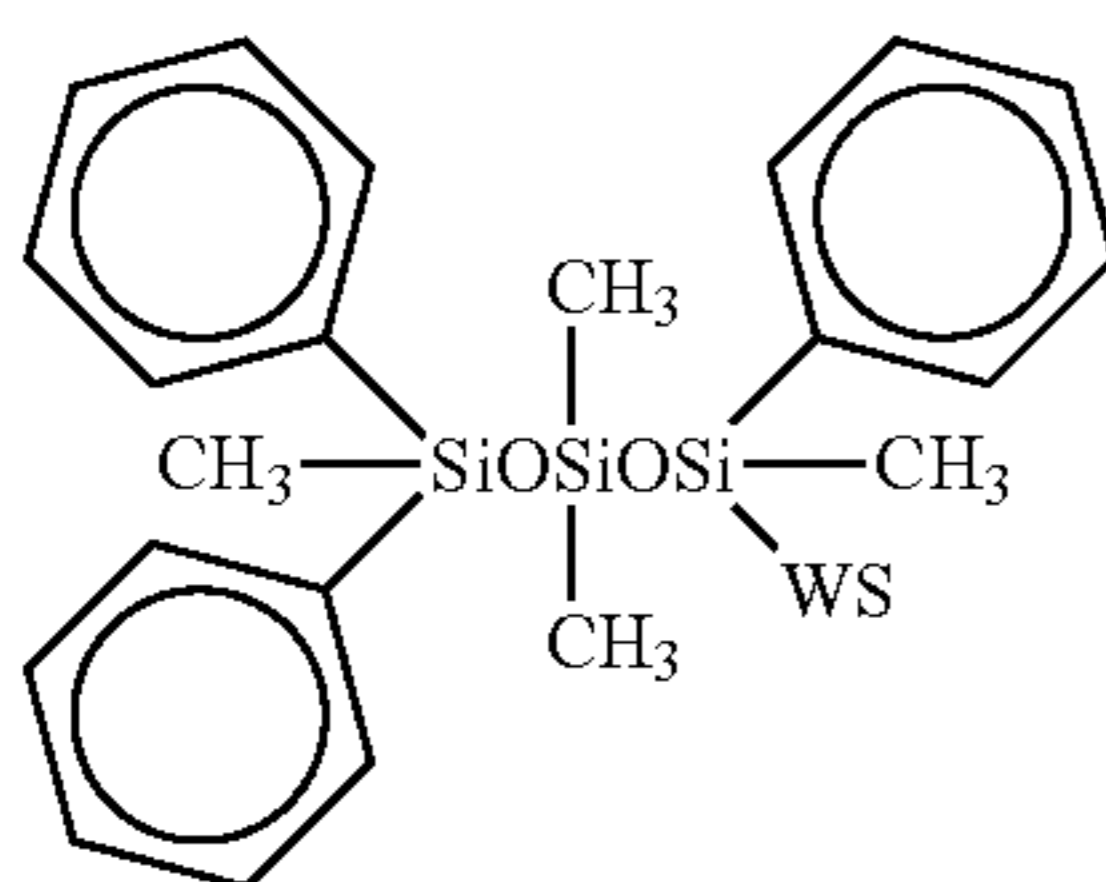


Alternatively, or in addition to bonding the wavelength-shifter to the polysiloxane backbone, the wavelength-shifter may be chemically bonded to a siloxane carrier that is then dispersed within the polysiloxane polymer. In one example of the preparation of the light-emitting polymer **20**, a siloxane monomer and the bonded wavelength-shifter/siloxane carrier are mixed together with the tritium carrier to disperse the bonded wavelength-shifter/siloxane carrier uniformly throughout the polysiloxane polymer. The mixture may be heated to facilitate the process and known laboratory or manufacturing equipment may be utilized to carry out the preparation.

As an example, the bonded wavelength shifter/siloxane carrier form the chemical structure shown below (where WS is the wavelength-shifter):



In another example where the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier, the wavelength shifter/siloxane carrier form the chemical structure below (where WS is the wavelength-shifter):



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FIG. 2 illustrates one example implementation of the light-emitting polymer **20** in an energy source **30** for generating electric current. In this example, the light-emitting polymer **20** is located adjacent to a photoelectric device **32**, such as a photovoltaic cell or photocell. The light **22** emitted from the light-emitting polymer **20** impinges upon a light-receiving surface **34** of the photoelectric device **32**, which converts the light into electrical energy. In this case, the photoelectric device **32** is shown in a spaced arrangement relative to the light-emitting polymer **20** and only on one side of the light-emitting polymer **20**. However, in other examples, the photoelectric device **32** may be in intimate contact with the light-emitting polymer **20** or designed to surround the light-emitting polymer **20** such that the photoelectric device **32** receives light emitted from all sides of the light-emitting polymer **20**. Thus, the illustrated arrangement may be adapted to suit the particular needs of an intended application.

Additionally, the photoelectric device **32** may be any type of photoelectric device or array for receiving the light **22** and converting the light **22** into electrical energy. For instance, the photoelectric device **32** may include specialized photocells that are adapted for absorbing light within a specific wavelength range to efficiently convert the light **22** into electrical energy.

In some examples, the light-emitting polymer **20** may exclude a scintillant or wavelength-shifter and rely on the chemical side groups of the polysiloxane polymer, such as the phenyl groups, to convert the radiation emitted from the tritium into light. In this case, the light **22** emitted may be in the ultraviolet wavelength range and the photoelectric device **32** may therefore be adapted to convert ultraviolet radiation into electrical energy. In this regard, the photoelectric device **32** may include quantum dot photocells for absorbing light **22** within the ultraviolet wavelength range.

Although a combination of features is shown in the illustrated examples, not all of them need to be combined to realize the benefits of various embodiments of this disclosure. In other words, a system designed according to an embodiment of this disclosure will not necessarily include all of the features shown in any one of the Figures or all of the portions schematically shown in the Figures. Moreover, selected features of one example embodiment may be combined with selected features of other example embodiments.

The preceding description is exemplary rather than limiting in nature. Variations and modifications to the disclosed examples may become apparent to those skilled in the art that do not necessarily depart from the essence of this disclosure.

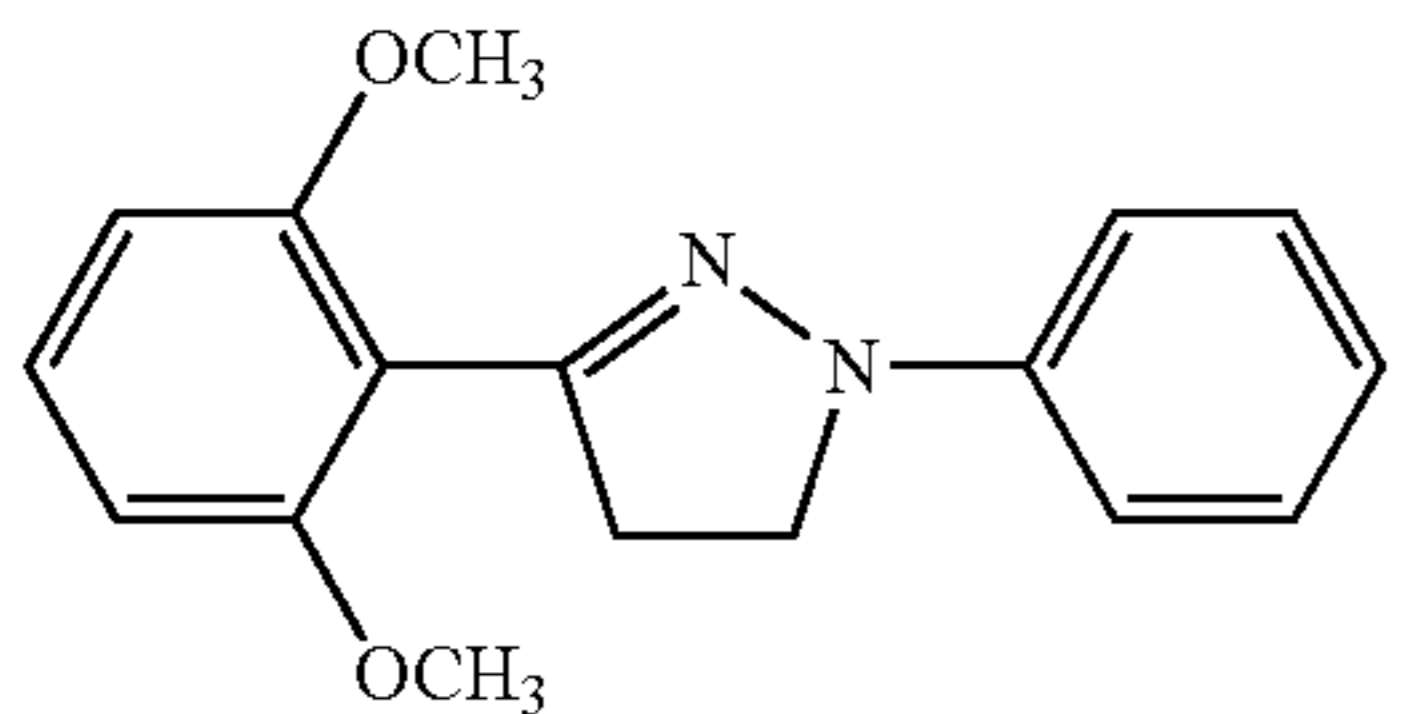
What is claimed is:

1. A light-emitting polymer composition comprising:
 - a polysiloxane polymer including tritium that emits radiation; and
 - a wavelength-shifter chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer or chemically bonded to a siloxane carrier dispersed within the polysiloxane polymer, the wavelength-shifter emitting visible light in response to the radiation.
2. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein a concentration of the wavelength-shifter in the polysiloxane polymer is approximately 0.015 gram/gram.
3. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, further comprising a tritium carrier bonded with the tritium, and the tritium carrier is divinyltetraphenyldisiloxane.
4. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier, and the siloxane polymer and the siloxane carrier each comprise phenyl groups.

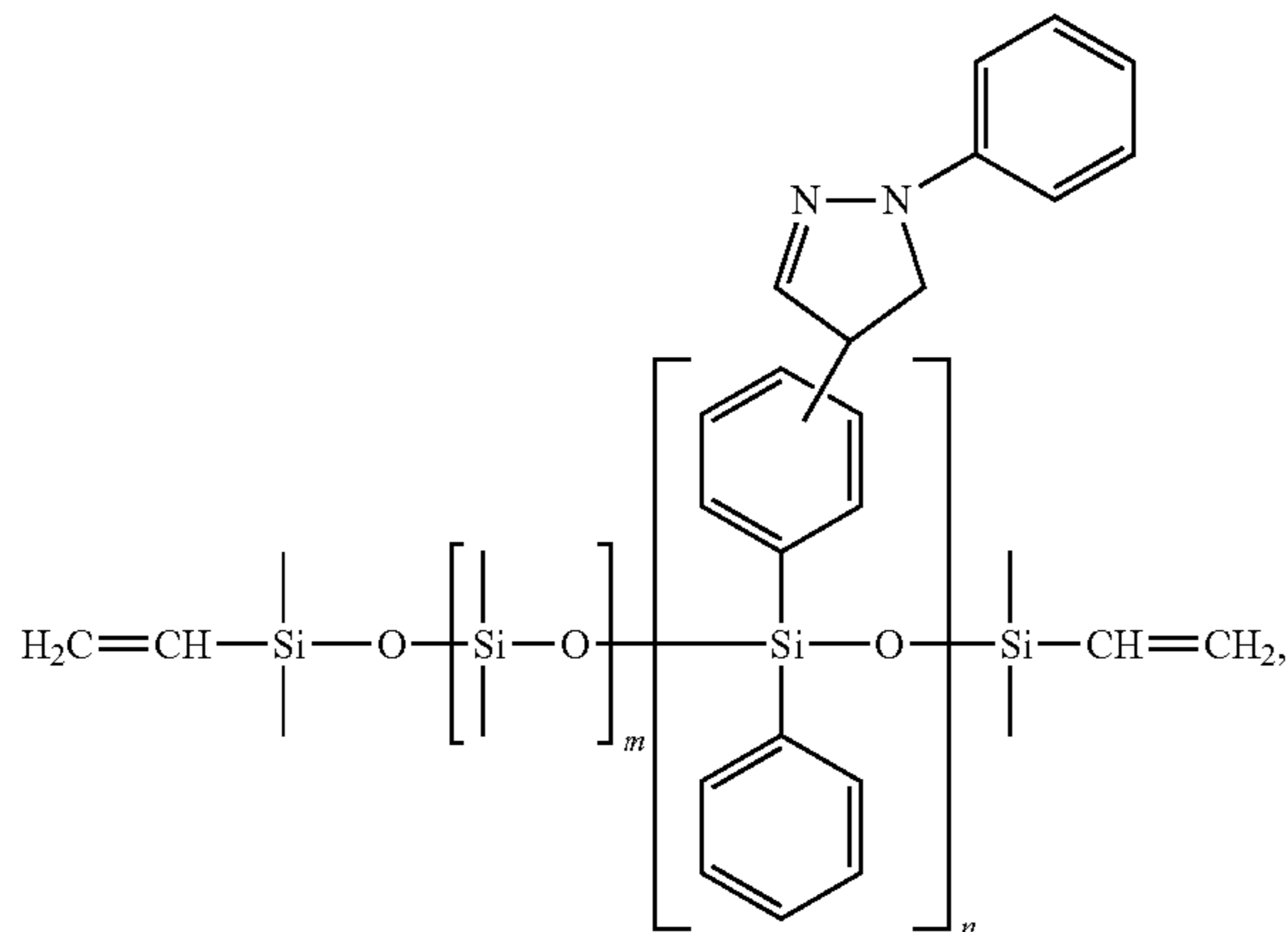
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5. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the wavelength-shifter comprises 1-phenyl-3-mesityl-2-pyrazoline.

6. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the wavelength-shifter comprises:



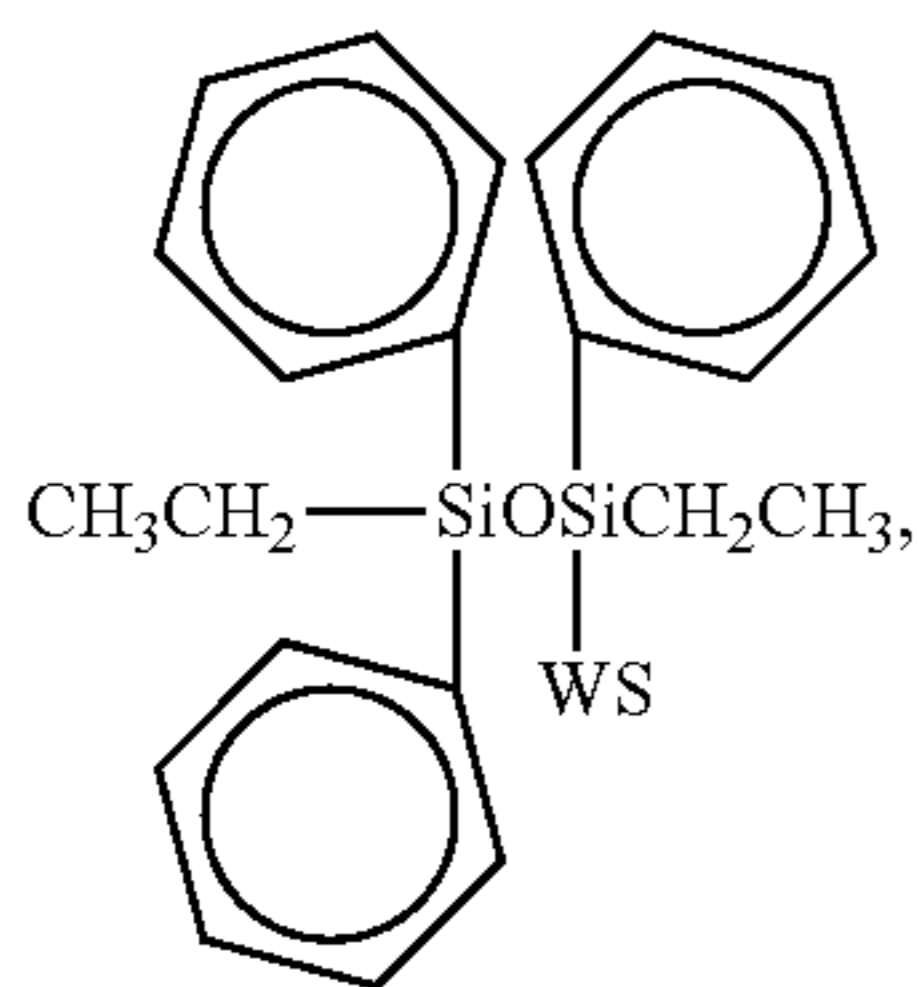
7. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer to form:



wherein m and n are each integers greater than or equal to 1.

8. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the polysiloxane polymer is a polyphenylsiloxane.

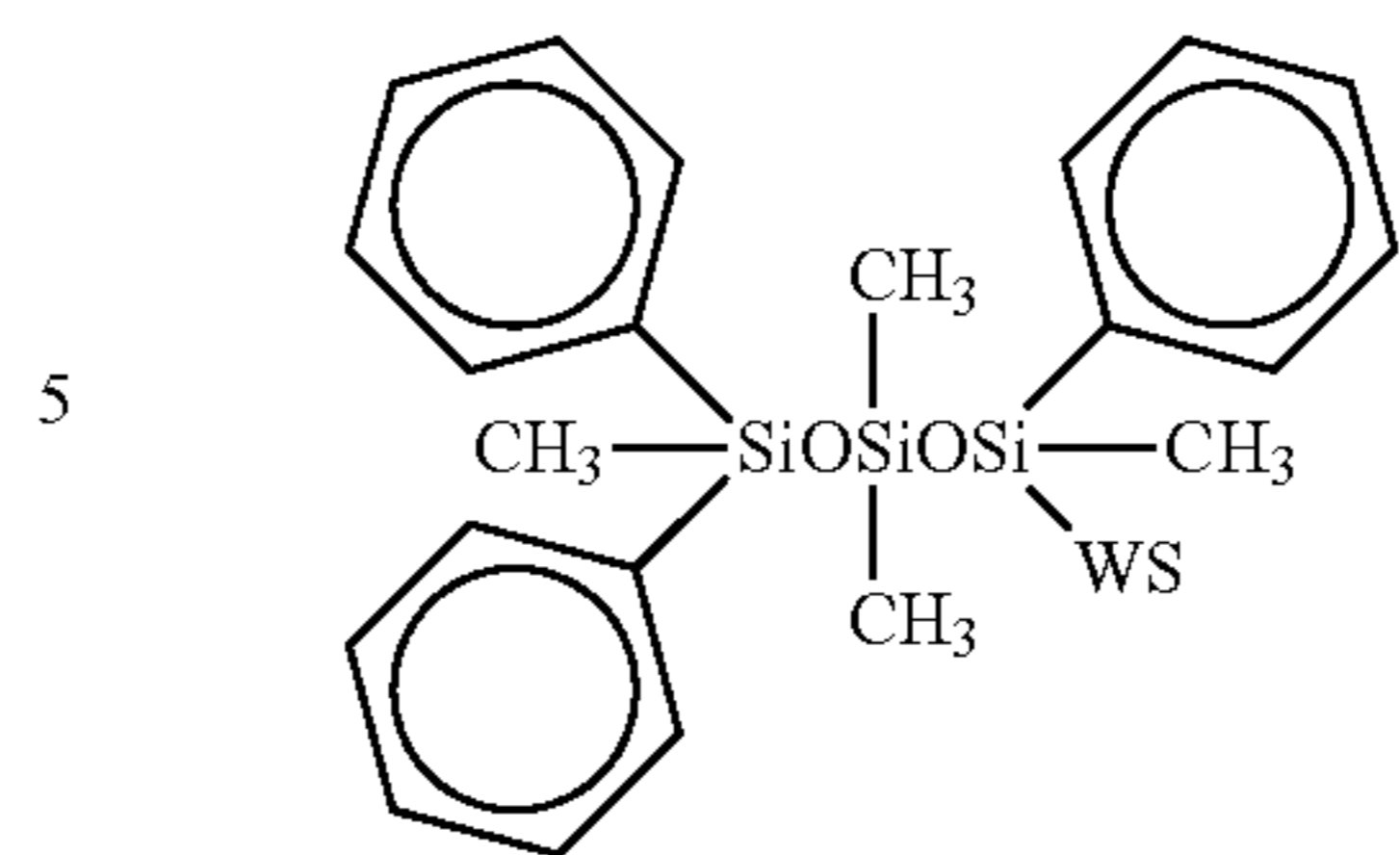
9. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier to form:



wherein WS is the wavelength-shifter.

10. The light-emitting polymer composition as recited in claim 1, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier to form:

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wherein WS is the wavelength-shifter.

11. A light source comprising:

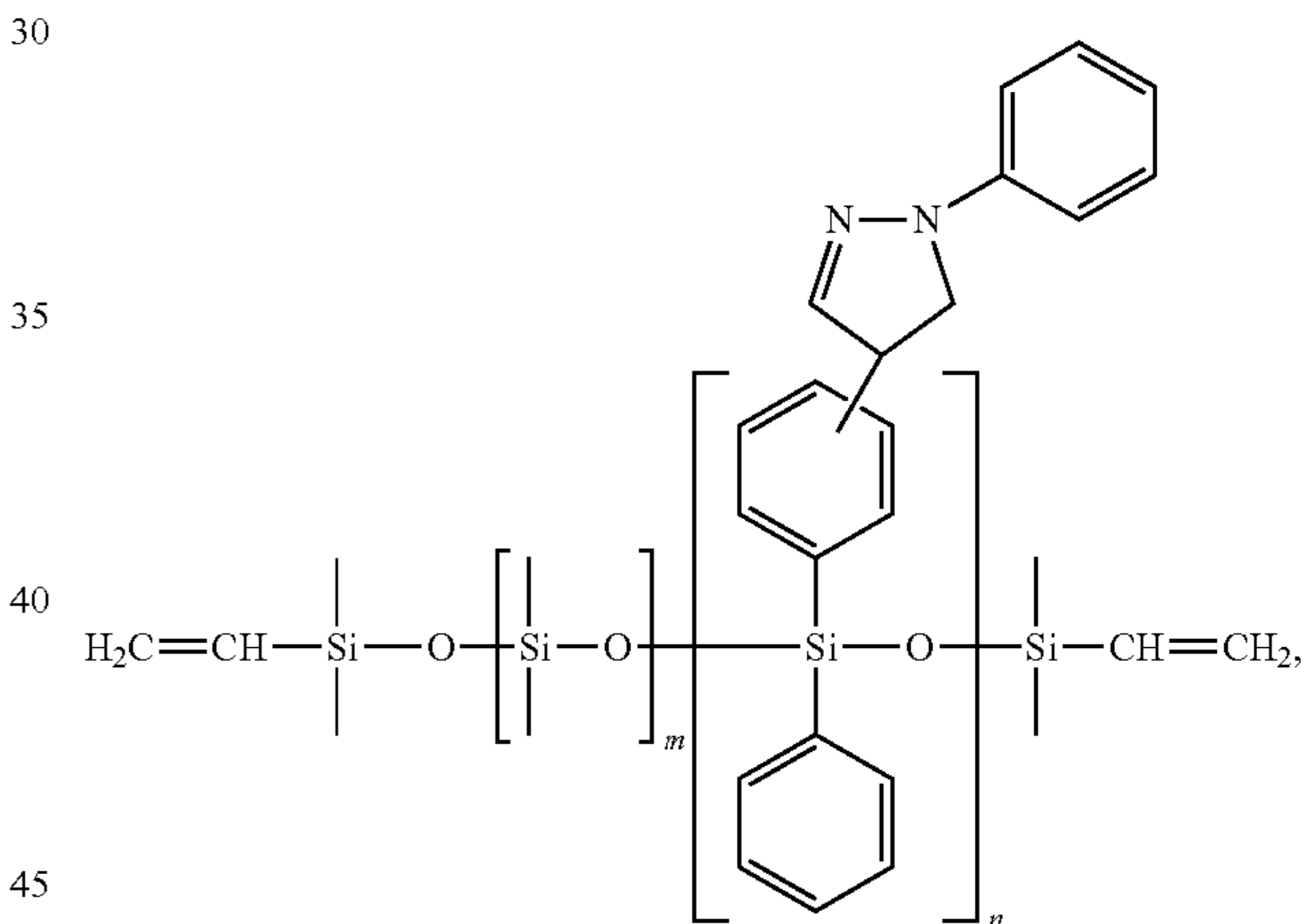
a polysiloxane polymer including tritium that emits radiation; and

a wavelength-shifter chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer or chemically bonded to a siloxane carrier dispersed within the polysiloxane polymer, the wavelength-shifter emitting visible light in response to the radiation.

12. The light source as recited in claim 11, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer.

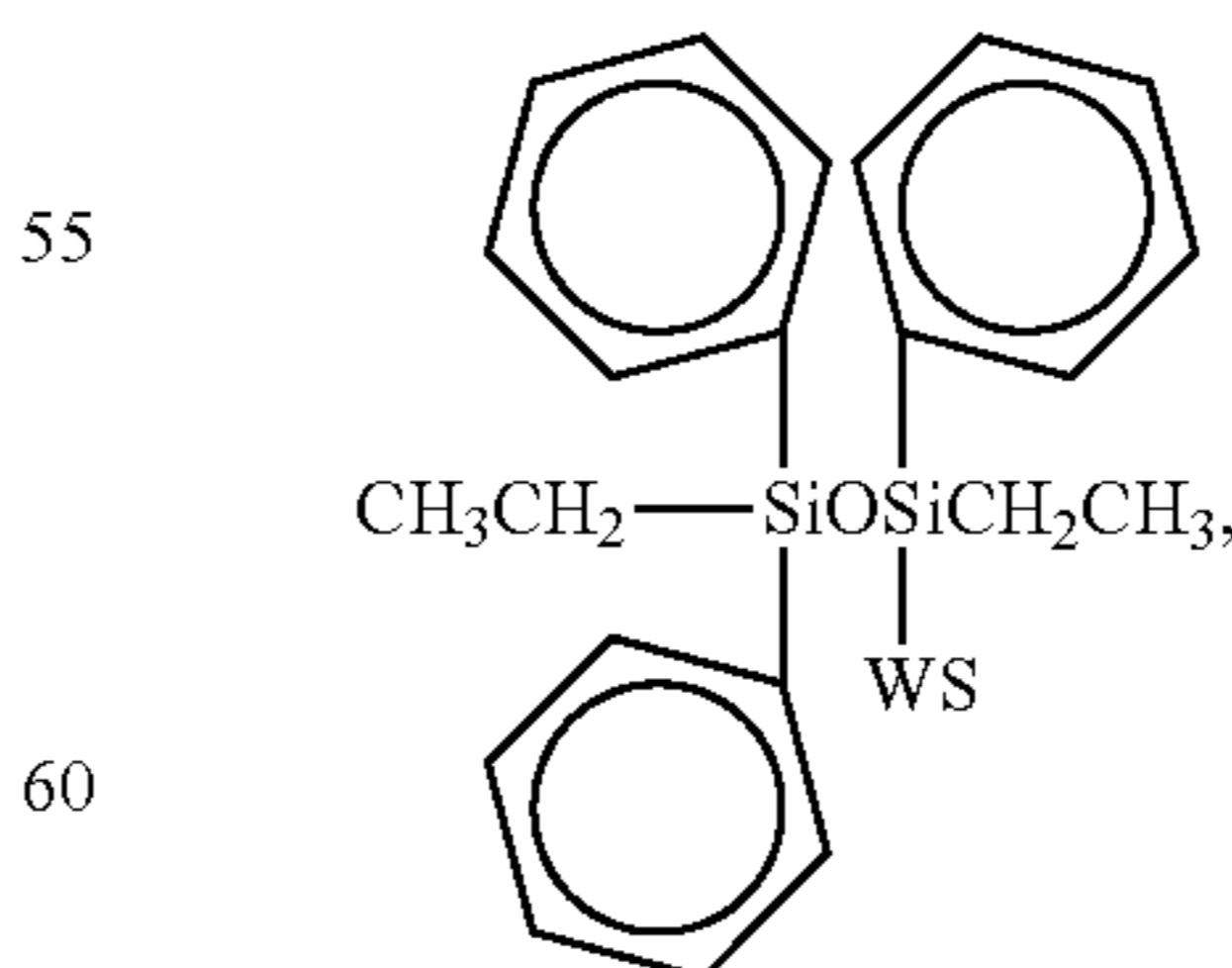
13. The light source as recited in claim 11, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier and is dispersed within the polysiloxane polymer.

14. The light source as recited in claim 11, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer to form:



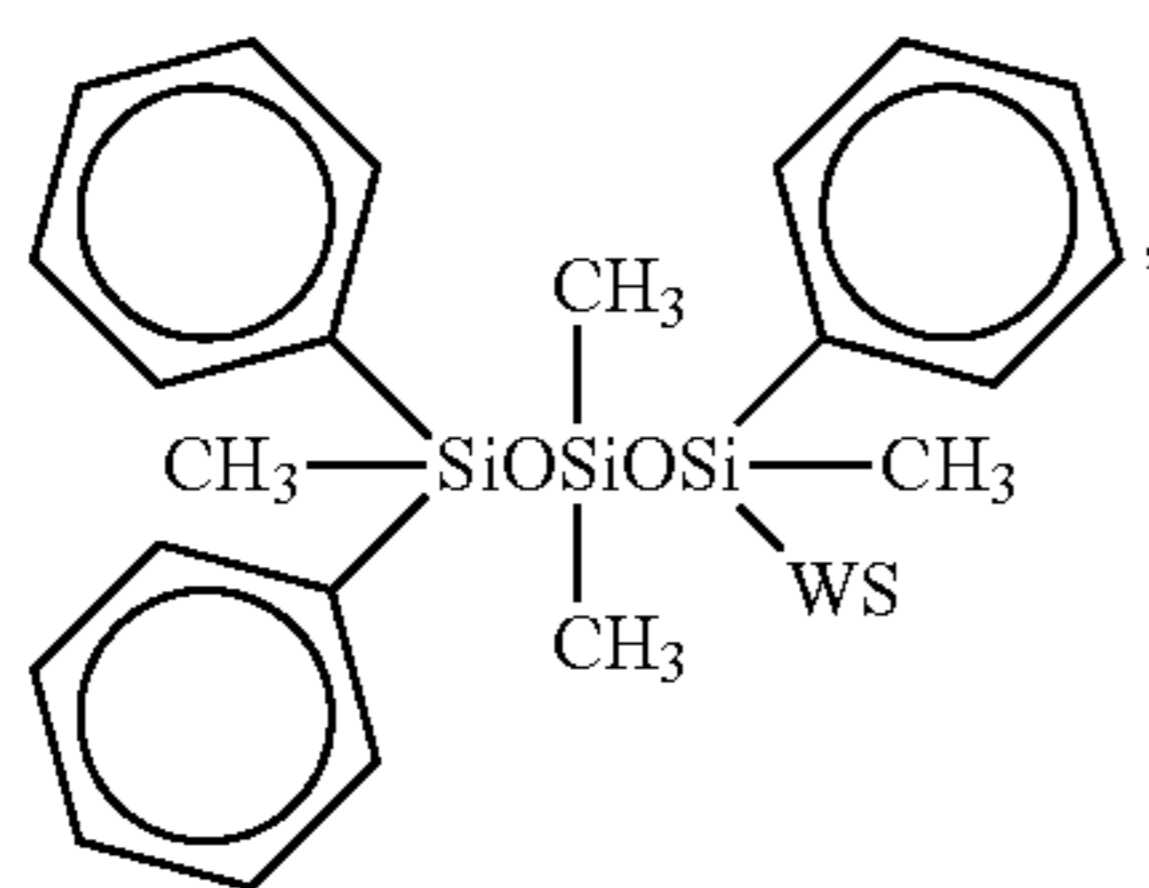
wherein m and n are each integers greater than or equal to 1.

15. The light source as recited in claim 11, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier to form:



wherein WS is the wavelength-shifter.

16. The light source as recited in claim 11, wherein the wavelength-shifter is chemically bonded to the siloxane carrier to form:



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wherein WS is the wavelength-shifter.

17. An energy source comprising:

a light-emitting polymer comprising a polysiloxane polymer having tritium that emits radiation and a wavelength-shifter chemically bonded to the polysiloxane polymer or chemically bonded to a siloxane carrier dispersed within the polysiloxane polymer, the wavelength-shifter emitting visible light in response to the radiation; and

a photoelectric device adjacent to the light-emitting polymer and operable to provide an electric current in response to the light.

18. The energy source as recited in claim 17, wherein the photoelectric device comprises quantum dot photocells for absorbing light within an ultraviolet wavelength range.

* * * * *